

Serial No.: 10/644,789
Response to Office Action dated January 11, 2005

REMARKS

By the present amendment, claims 1, 3, 6, 19, 22, 24, and 26 have been amended. Claims 5 and 27 have been cancelled. Claims 1-4, 6-26, and 28-29 are currently pending in the application.

Rejection under 35 USC 112, second paragraph

The claims have been amended to remove the language objected to by the Examiner. The claims have also been amended to recite the essential processing elements. Therefore, it is respectfully requested that this rejection be withdrawn.

Claim rejections under 35 USC 102 (e)

Claims 1-6 and 18-29 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,814,506. A copy of the certified translation of priority documents Nos. 2002-259719, 2002-281390 accompanies this response, antedating the filing date of the '506 patent. Therefore it is respectfully requested that this rejection be withdrawn.

Claim 19 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,468,720 to Hirabayashi. Claim 19 has been amended to clarify the process and to recite that the photothermographic material used in the process contains at least one benzotriazole compound. This is not taught or suggested by the Hirabayashi patent, therefore it is respectfully requested that this rejection be withdrawn.

Claim rejections under 35 U.S.C. 103(a)

Claims 7-18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over the combination of U.S. Patent No. 6,814,506 in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,524,781. As discussed above, the '506 patent has been antedated by the filing of the certified translations of priority documents Nos. 2002-259719, 2002-281390; therefore it is

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respectfully requested that this rejection be withdrawn.

Claims 1-5, 6, 9-29 were rejected under 35 U.S.C.103(a) as being unpatentable over the combination of U.S. Patent No. 6,240,102 to Bauer in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,468,720 to Hirabayashi. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Hirabayashi ('720) discloses developing at 22-44 mm/s but not teach or suggest imagewise exposing and thermal developing in which the photothermographic material begins to be developed at an exposed portion thereof while another portion is still being exposed as recited in the present claims. The present inventive method permits the construction of a compact thermal developing device, particularly one having a distance between the imagewise exposure section and the developing section of not more than 50cm.

The secondary reference to Bauer '102 does not overcome the deficiencies of the Hirabayashi '720 reference. Bauer relates only to a conventional process of developing a photothermographic material, not one in which an exposed portion of the photothermographic material is developed while another portion is still being exposed. Further Hirabayashi and Bauer do not disclose a benzotriazole compound as set forth in claim 19. Therefore it is respectfully requested that this rejection be withdrawn.

Claims 7-17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over the combination of Bauer and Hirabayashi and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,524,781 to Wada. While Wada teaches the use of a trapping agent, it fails to overcome the deficiencies of the primary references, discussed above. Therefore, it is respectfully requested that this rejection be withdrawn.

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In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, it is submitted that all of the claims currently pending in the application are in condition for allowance. Early and favorable action is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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